Book reviews

Rheumatism in Populations. By J. S. Lawrence. (Pp. xii+572; illustrated+tables. £22.00.) Heinemann, London. 1977.

Epidemiological studies into the rheumatic diseases started in the United Kingdom with the Glover reports to the Ministry of Health in the 1920s, showing that these disorders accounted for one-sixth of total industrial disability, a yearly expenditure of £2 000 000 in sickness benefits, and a loss of 21 million working days every year. Subsequent studies confirmed the economic importance of the various forms of rheumatism and no doubt helped to influence the formation of the International League against Rheumatism at that time.

In 1956 the Arthritis & Rheumatism Council established a Field Unit based in Manchester, and Dr. John Lawrence was appointed to be its first director until his retirement from it in 1968. He had already carried out epidemiological research into rheumatic disease among miners and dockworkers as well as surveys in the general population, and after the formation of the Field Unit he went on, in association with Professor Kellgren and other colleagues, to develop these studies, which have been presented over the years to the Heberden Society (Dr. Lawrence was Heberden Orator in 1969) and published in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* and elsewhere. Heavily tabulated and highly factual, they do not make for easy listening or light reading, but they have done a great service to rheumatology, not only for the results in themselves, but also by enabling the discipline to take a leading position in showing the value of epidemiological methodology. Similar excellent investigations were carried out by others in the USA, Europe, Africa, New Zealand, and elsewhere, but the work of the Manchester school remained the paradigm.

In *Rheumatism in Populations* Dr. Lawrence draws together the very considerable amount of epidemiological work which has now been done. After opening descriptions of the history of epidemiology and epidemiological methods in relation to the rheumatic diseases, subsequent chapters give accounts of the epidemiology of various rheumatic symptoms and of

individual chronic rheumatic diseases. These include the inflammatory disorders of connective tissue, bone disease, and immune deficiency diseases (although current studies on complement deficiencies have been too recent for inclusion). There is also a most useful chapter on occupational aspects.

The omission of rheumatic fever, although deliberate, is a pity; this is still an important rheumatic disease in global terms and should have been considered in a comprehensive book of this kind. Although the story of the association between rheumatic diseases and histocompatibility antigens, especially that between the enthesopathies and HLA B27 is still unfolding, it should have been possible to include more than the very brief description given to it; and accounts of certain entities, such as the Lesch-Nyhan syndrome, which, while rare, are nevertheless of great epidemiological and genetic significance, might well have been expanded a little. There are some irritating errors in the text and in the references, and regrettably there are hardly any of the latter of more recent date than 1971. Indeed, perhaps the book reflects a sort of *bel époque* of Lawrence-type classical epidemiology, with its feet in doorways, high completion rates, and endless arguments about unimodal or bimodal distribution curves.

But a *bel époque* it has certainly been, and all rheumatologists, epidemiologists, and medical statisticians will need at least access to the book as an essential reference work.

J. T. SCOTT

Still's Disease: Juvenile Chronic Polyarthritis. Edited by M. I. V. Jayson. (Pp. xiii+289; illustrated+tables. £6.25.) Academic Press. London. 1976.

The 1st International Symposium on Still's disease was held in 1975 and was organized jointly by the Departments of Medicine and Child Health, University of Bristol, the venue for the meeting. The proceedings, comprising 21 papers contributed by 37 physicians, orthopaedic surgeons, and nonclinical research workers from the USA, Norway, and the UK, are divided into 3 sections, clinical, immuno-

logical, and therapeutic, and each is followed by a short summary of the discussions.

It is evident that the time was ripe for this symposium, as a great deal of experience has now accumulated from careful long-term follow-up of a sufficiently large number of cases of what has been considered a rare disease, added to which there are relatively recent advances on the immunological front.

These contributions alter the concept of Still's disease as it was generally regarded until approximately the last decade, although a full understanding of the various forms of polyarthritis starting in childhood cannot yet be realized. There has unfortunately been little of importance to add on the therapeutic front.

As one would expect, the subject is covered comprehensively and is backed up by a large bibliography (and an efficient index). It appears that juvenile chronic polyarthritis is less rare than was supposed some years ago, but this may well be accounted for by more widely available medical services, greater knowledge and awareness among medical personnel, and better health education for the public. Nevertheless it is possible that there is a real increase, just as there is a real decrease in incidence of rheumatic fever, and it was stated that juvenile chronic polyarthritis has replaced rheumatic fever in the USA as the commonest cause of arthritis in children, where an estimate of prevalence is given as 1 in 1500 (compared with 1 in 4000 in the UK (Bristol)).

There is still controversy on nomenclature and classification which is difficult to resolve owing to the, as yet, inadequate knowledge of aetiology and the variability of onset and course of the disorders which are bracketed under the general descriptive term 'juvenile chronic polyarthritis', or 'juvenile rheumatoid arthritis' (JRA), favoured in the USA; it is agreed that these terms comprise several different entities which have somewhat different prognoses.

The essence of publishing proceedings of symposia must surely be threefold: to consolidate and to recall the contributions and discussions for the participants, to convey as effectively as possible the whole

event to the many more who were not present, and to provide a useful up-to-date source of reference.

There is no doubt that the information that was submitted at the symposium has been faithfully reproduced, but the three brief discussion sections not being reported verbatim, but summarized almost

completely impersonally, cannot convey any suggestion of the liveliness of the debate one presumes to have been enjoyed (the reviewer was not present).

The fact that this volume, pleasantly presented on good quality paper and printed in easy to read double-spaced photolitho, is a hardback suggests that it

is intended to endure as a reference work, and it will surely fulfil that role for paediatricians, rheumatologists, immunologists, and others, at least until the next symposium. It is hoped that by then the elusive aetiological factors will be revealed, thus enabling a more rational approach to successful treatment.

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